LEGO PINBALL

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Pinball construction and Play - on the web

This is pinball with a LEGO system of play. you can change components on the board to make your own table! Forget just going for a boring high score… LEGO pinball gives you some real goals.

Each level uses a LEGO theme and includes a trapped Minifig to 'collect'. In the town level he will be in a jail, in Star wars a laser force field.

Each level contains a brick wall obstructing a portal to the next level. Hitting this with a normal ball will not break through but here is where the Minifig comes in!

Reaching an adequate score and completing some Pinball challenges releases the Minifig, who then rushes to a special feature ball, *climbs in* and is released into play. This ball can punch through the wall to the next level which is cool, but even better allows you some wild 'in ball' Minifig experience of the play.

The final game embraces the Soccer range and without a next level to make for differs from the above. In this level the board becomes a soccer pitch with flippers at each end protecting a goal. You are pitted against the computer's AI player in soccer on a pinball table! The table is raked upward to the centre line to ensure the ball rolls to the flippers in all cases and that once in ones own half, the pressure shifts to defence!

Stage 2
If Stage 1 provides suitable metrics Stage 2 would be a boxed title.

The boxed title simply offers the finest pinball experience out. Unlike the above which will be limited by download size, this is texturally rich with detailed tables and advanced physics.

Unlike Stage 1, the double ended Soccer variant would be a multi-player experience, possible web based, and could be expanded out to a hexagonal 6 player game! The buffers etc. would continue to appear as LEGO related versions of the normal arcade components but would include a Minifig operator, and have much greater flexibility of placing.

Platform
Web enabled PC using a proprietary 3D plug-in

USP

Few pinball games allow construction, and none do this with LEGO bricks. None that I have found includes an in-ball camera, or use characters to operate the pinball components in the way we would in Stage 2.

A competitor would be the Pinball Game on the South Park site but as a simple top down view, offers a very small table and appears a very cheap production. It offers no levels and has little repeat value.

Stage 2 offers the detail to make the LEGO characterisation much stronger, and the construction aspect a unique and compelling experience.

Multi-player pinball is normally turn based. I believe the soccer option to be unique, and a square four player or hexagonal six player board.

ESP

Pinball is a game playable by young children but linked with a charismatic teenage image such as the Pinball Wizard or a disaffected James Dean in a diner. When playing well it fuses sound, light, speed in a self satisfying way evocative of Ford's Ad' "Man and Machine in perfect harmony" but delivers this to those still too young to drive.

Potential Pitfalls

A multi-player mode could have latency problems, but played on a suitable server should be OK. For the pinball fanatic the Stage 1 implementation might be competing against downloaded demos of full products which will inevitably have better graphics and gameplay, but few children would probably have the patience or perhaps knowledge to download and install a typical 5Mb demo.

Developers

Most games on websites that don't require a large download and install tend to be 2D and made in Shockwave. Shockwave is comparatively seamless, but few titles to date have proved compelling. However 3Dgroove have propriety 3D technology which operates perfectly within Shockwave and could be a perfect solution. A fine example of what they can do is the Pool game on their site http://www.3Dglaze.com

Alternatively we could use Superscape's Viscape technology but risk stretching their resources when undertaking parallel development of Creator. Equally this route may place too many eggs in one basket, or give Superscape the impression that we are tied to their technology.

Stage 2 would benefit from using seasoned developers of existing pinball titles such as Empires Pro-Pinball, or Sierras 3D Ultra pinball.

The next step would be communication with 3D glaze to determine whether their technology is up to the task, and development of a brief.